

[A Beginner's Guide to Transformative Works](#) by [Luddleston](#)

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Summary:

Galo's not normally up to date on whatever-the-heck is going on in the realm of the internet and social media, but this time, he's made a Discovery.

Apparently, he's become popular enough that people have started writing fanfiction about him. And Lio. And him and Lio, together.

He's gotta tell Lio about this. It's gonna be *hilarious*.

Lio is less amused than expected. But he does want to read more. Maybe. He's just curious, that's all. He didn't stay up all night reading fanfiction.

A Beginner's Guide to Transformative Works

Author's Note:

I always find this kind of thing interesting to write about, and while I think most people would be pretty uncomfortable with finding fanfiction about them and their roommate, Galo is the perfect person to just be amazed by and excited about it.

Also: none of the fics mentioned in this are based on real ones, but if there's anything similar to any of them out there, feel free to send them my way bc I haven't read a lot in this fandom yet and so I just went with tropes that I like

It was a little weird going from being a locally-known public figure to a world-famous celebrity-slash-hero, but Galo thought he was handling things alright. He liked the attention, he liked posing for pictures with people on the street, he liked signing autographs (although, why anybody would want his messy signature on anything was beyond him). He'd even made a few friends who had originally approached him just to talk about how cool his mech was!

Lio struggled with it a bit more, but Lio was an introvert and he lost more and more energy the longer he was around strangers, especially when those strangers wanted his constant attention (and not in a following-him-into-battle sort of way). Galo couldn't empathize, after all, he was as outgoing as they came, but he could do his best to make sure that he took over conversations when Lio got exhausted or planned events so that they'd get home before Lio wore himself out in the first place.

And hey, if it ever got too much, Galo was fine with dipping out on some social function early so that he could wrap himself and Lio up in every blanket they owned and watch movies on the couch.

That might actually be preferable to a social event at this point.

(When did that become preferable?)

There was one area of celebrity-dom in which Galo was just as bad as Lio, though. Galo had never exactly thrived on the internet, because he preferred running down the street and talking to someone over sending them a message, and his phone was set to alert him of emergencies and not much else.

His social media made him look, according to Aina, "like a fifth grader who thinks the only things you can post about are pizza and what dogs you saw today."

Galo personally thought his pizza and dog blogging was very high-quality content, but it was not, apparently, "on trend." Galo had never really been on top of things when it came to following trends, though.

It wasn't that Galo never knew what was happening in the nebulous realm of the internet, it was just that he never knew about things *first*. It was only after Lucia showed him a meme in person or Aina tagged him in something a half-dozen times that he took notice. The memes were pretty great, though. Especially the ones about Lio, because quoting them would rile him up to no end, and Galo liked when he got fiery, even if it was less literal now.

The article of the top ten best and worst shirtless pics of Galo had been a particularly interesting one, and although Galo hadn't read it past the headline, he had to assume they had a hard time finding the worst ones.

All that said, it was unusual that Galo would be the first person to notice something on the internet, and even more unusual that he'd notice something before Lio. Sure, Lio hadn't even had a *phone* before everything, but he kept up with things now, if only to ensure that there wasn't anybody out there spreading hatred about former Burnish. Or, in Lio's words, "talking shit about me."

So, now that he had something Lio probably hadn't seen (probably), he was ecstatic. Practically ran from his parking spot to his apartment building. *Did* run up all the stairs to his apartment.

He hadn't actually considered what he'd do with all his excited energy if Lio wasn't home, but thankfully, that question didn't need answering. When Galo arrived, Lio was on the couch, curled up against one arm of it with his feet tucked up underneath him, like he was leaving a space for Galo to sit down next to him. That was a nice thought.

Galo didn't sit, though, because he was too excited about his amazing discovery. He did vault over the back of the couch, landing directly in front of Lio, who blinked once, but looked otherwise unsurprised. He was used to it by now.

"Lio! Guess what I found on the internet!" Galo clutched his phone to his chest, the screen facing away from Lio, unwilling to share his discovery with Lio until he at least made one decent guess.

Lio arched one eyebrow at him. "I've no idea. Weird porn?"

"No! Well, sort of. Maybe? No." Galo shook his head, because of course Lio would have made the one guess that would throw him off enough to make him forget what he'd been talking about in the first place. "Do you know what fanfiction is?"

Lio continued to make the same face at him. Quizzical, and a little concerned for what the hell Galo's brain was doing. "Like that stuff Lucia writes about her robot cartoon?"

"Yes! Wait. Lucia writes fanfiction about people in that robot cartoon?" Galo asked. This conversation was beginning to spiral into stranger and stranger territory.

"No, she writes fanfiction about the robots."

"Isn't that... weird?"

"Yes."

"How do they...?"

"You don't want to know. You really, really don't want to know."

Goddammit, Lio. Now Galo was going to *have* to ask Lucia about it, or else his curiosity would literally kill him. He shook his head again. *Get back on track, Thymos.*

"Well, apparently some people don't just stick to fictional robots. They write about actual people, famous people. Usually like, pop singers and actors and stuff." Galo unlocked his phone, navigating to the tab he'd been so interested in earlier that day. "But, uh, there's some about Burning Rescue, and Mad Burnish, and both, I mean, more specifically, about us."

"Oh?" The curiosity was back, without the concern this time.

"Yeah! It's kinda crazy." Galo flopped onto the couch next to Lio, showing him a page entitled *#Galolio Fic Recs*. "Some of them are weird, but there are some that are good. Like, *really good*. These people know how to write!"

Lio looked at the page with an expression Galo couldn't quite parse, his curled forefinger pressed to his lips as his eyes skimmed the page. "Have you read all of these?" he asked eventually.

"Not all of them, but I kind of went down a rabbit hole reading them on my break." Galo sighed. Remi had been pissed at him for coming back late, and he hadn't even been able to come up with a decent excuse aside from 'I got caught up reading.' "Do you want me to send you my favorites?"

Lio shrugged, and his face didn't change. He was not as excited about this as Galo wanted him to be. "Sure, why not."

— — —

It took Lio a couple of days to get around to looking through the links Galo had sent him. He was somehow busier nowadays than he'd been when he was trying to stop a genocidal war, which he chalked up to this new thing called 'having friends' and also 'trying to keep one of said friends from finding out Lio had feelings for him'. Thank god Galo was about as perceptive as a brick, or that one would take more time than there was in the day.

Lio was curled up on the couch in their apartment, which had become a habitual way for him to end his day. Galo had sent over links to about six different fanfictions, each followed by effusive commentary. Lio decided to just start at the beginning. Galo would probably send the best one first, right? His comment on the first one read 'this one has a DOG!!!' so it seemed like it would be top on Galo's list.

The story was short, maybe a couple of pages, and it was literally just about Galo getting a pet dog. In reality, their apartment didn't allow pets, so Galo had been begging Ignis to let them get a firehouse dog, even though that had been an outdated tradition long before Galo was born. Lio wondered whether the writer had heard about that, or if they'd just made the (correct) guess that Galo was a dog person. Galo's fictional pet dog was a Shiba Inu, and fictional-Galo wanted to get a custom Matoi outfit for her.

It was so scarily like something real-Galo would do, Lio *had* to read the next one.

The second story was also short, and also humorous. Galo's taste was beginning to show. Lio wasn't featured in this one, it was all about Burning Rescue trying to throw Galo a surprise birthday party and Galo almost catching them at it a half-dozen times. The author clearly had to work around the fact that they didn't know when Galo's birthday was, and Lio realized that he didn't know, either. He'd have to text Aina.

There was a space to leave a comment for the author, but Lio wasn't sure what kind of response was appropriate, especially when your friend-roommate-crush was the source material. He skimmed through the earlier comments, wondering if any of them were from Galo. One of them read, 'can this please happen for real???' and so Lio had his suspicions.

He was still lost for ideas, so he just tapped the button with the heart and moved on to Galo's third recommendation.

This one was an alternate universe in which instead of being a firefighter and a fire-starter, both of them were college students. Lio wondered whether Galo had ever gone to college, or if he'd started training to join Burning Rescue right after high school. The author had decided that Galo

would be a public relations major (well, he did like to talk) and that Lio would be, of all things, a fashion major.

Huh. Now that he thought about it, that would be sort of fun. Lio hadn't attended university, too busy starting fires around that point in his life.

This one was longer, separated into chapters as if it were a novella. As Lio continued to read, afternoon became evening, and the sun slipped below what of the horizon Lio could see. Galo worked late, so nobody would be home to chastise Lio for sitting around on the couch reading fictional stories about himself, but Lio knew that when he woke up the next morning, Galo would be pouting at the fridge and asking Lio if he ate dinner. Lio decided to make the answer to that question 'yes,' and stuck some takeout from earlier that week in the microwave and continued to read on his phone while he waited on it.

He was paying more attention to the story than to his dinner, and so he burned his mouth on his first bite.

The longer the story went on, the more... *romantic* it got. The author seemed to think that Galo, or at least, their personal version of Galo, had *feelings* for Lio. Reading an anonymous person's description of an alternate-universe fake-Galo imagining how he wanted to kiss Lio was mind-bending to say the least, and Lio almost stopped reading, but it was... good.

Really good.

One of the other Burnish Lio had traveled with for a long time kept a stash of romance novels with her, and would lend them out if somebody asked. They were crappy paperbacks, falling apart at the binding, the covers bent and white around the edges from years of being shoved into backpacks at the last minute when they went on the run again.

In the rare times where they were not being chased by humans, Lio read a couple. They weren't really to his tastes, a lot of overly-flowery descriptions about how masculine and stonehearted the men were and how delicate and helpless the women were. When he imagined a romance, at least one in a book, he imagined that.

But this...

Galo watched Lio's hands as he toyed with his pencil while he spoke. People called Galo restless, but Lio was ever-moving in some ways, too. On him, it was fluid, as though every little nervous tic was a motion in a dance.

He had nice hands, Galo thought. Small, slim-fingered, they looked extraordinarily pale when Galo saw him without his gloves on. Galo wondered how they would fit between his. Would he feel overly large and clumsy with his palm pressed to Lio's, or would he be swept up in the dance, Lio's grace transmitting to whatever he touched?

Lio looked up and caught him staring. "What?"

"Nothing," Galo said.

Everything, Galo thought.

This was rather lovely.

It was inaccurate in some places—Galo saw Lio without his gloves almost every day now that they lived together, and Lio did not fidget quite so gracefully (he usually bit his nails)—but it was lovely. Lovely, and impossible, there was no way Galo would think something like that about him.

Galo...

Wait.

Galo had read this.

Galo had recommended that Lio read it.

Why the absolute fuck had Galo recommended this?

Lio dropped the phone, but immediately scrambled to pick it back up. In the process, he knocked the empty takeout container to the floor, and had to

snatch it up as well, plopping it on the coffee table and re-rotating his phone so that he could read more easily.

There had to be a reason. It had to have a funny ending, or one of them would get a dog, something. Any reason other than 'Galo enjoys reading romantic fanfiction about the two of them so much he thought Lio would enjoy it too.' Lio couldn't handle this. He'd settled more-or-less-happily into being attracted to Galo but knowing nothing would ever come of it.

He was nearly at the end of the chapter. He could finish it, and the next one, read it all the way to the end and figure out why Galo thought this was such a good recommendation, and hopefully, he could go to bed with the knowledge that Galo called this one of his favorites because it ended with a maelstrom of puppies.

Oh god, the rest of the chapter was even worse.

"Lio, I..." Galo began, and Lio looked up at him, eyes wide and questioning and so... open.

This might actually work.

Galo took another steadying breath. "Can I... can I kiss you?"

He hit the end of the chapter, his thumb automatically going for the next—and it wasn't there. The 'next chapter' button had vanished, and Lio was going to lose his actual, literal mind. He mashed the button that would take him to the top of the page as if his phone would produce another chapter with force, and glanced over the informational bit at the top which he'd been skipping up 'til now.

Chapters: 6/?

He scrolled back down, seething with emotion, certain that if he still had a connection to the Promare, he'd be wreathed in flame by now. He was so tangled up in his thoughts, he didn't even have time to pause and consider *why* finding out there wasn't another chapter to this fanfiction was the most

frustrating thing in his life right now. He just knew he had to say something about it.

He began writing a comment three times, unable to finish a single one before he decided what he was saying was stupid and held down the backspace button.

what happens next—

are you writing more—

please write more—

He returned to the top of the page, wondering when this was originally written, and if the author was in the progress of writing more, or if it had been abandoned. Oh. The last update was two days ago. He was probably fine.

Lio realized he could do something truly ridiculous and make an account on this website so that he could subscribe to this story and be notified when the next chapter came up. It was entirely unrelated to his goal of figuring out what Galo saw in this thing, but he'd suddenly forgotten about that bit.

He couldn't use his real name. Or maybe he could; nobody would suspect that "liofofia" was the actual Lio Fotia. The person who wrote the dog story had Galo's name in their username. Alright, then.

Username already taken? It was his goddamn name! It couldn't be already taken!

Lio was getting far too worked up about this. He blew his bangs out of his face, and decided that he needed a haircut. And then he decided to use Guiera's name for his username instead. Sure. Whatever.

He had an account on a website solely devoted to fanfiction and he was subscribed to one whole story, and it was about the man he had a crush on kissing him. What even was his life.

He needed to go to sleep and forget that this ever happened. Bury his head under the blankets and hope to god he didn't dream about all this bullshit. He could remember the existence of this fanfiction when he got a notification for a new chapter, and think about it then. There was about an 88% chance that would backfire on him, but he'd been in a reading-haze for too many hours, now, and he wasn't exactly thinking straight. He put his phone in his pocket and wandered to his bedroom, rubbing at his eyes, which were tired from looking at a screen all night.

Lio had moved in with Galo after everything went down. It seemed like the sensible option at the time. Moving to a new building with Galo so that the two of them could have their own rooms was less justifiable, but whenever he tried to explain his actions to his friends, Meis and Guiera always just said "uh-huh, suuuuure," like Lio was a child doing a poor job at lying to them. Never mind the fact that he had no idea what he was supposedly lying about.

He'd been fine with sleeping on an air mattress in Galo's living room, but he liked having his own room much more. His bed was piled with at least four blankets at all times, and he burrowed under them as he did every night, dutifully setting his alarm for the next morning.

He didn't fall asleep. His phone was right there, and the person who wrote the alternate universe where Galo fell in love with him on an idyllic college campus had twelve other works on their profile with the tag "Lio Fotia/Galo Thymos" and Lio couldn't help himself. He would only read one more.

This time, he checked to ensure that it was complete. He didn't think he could handle beginning another work in progress and becoming sorely disappointed when he made his way to the end.

Chapters: 1/1

Alright, he was safe.

Lio realized, belatedly, that maybe he should stop ignoring everything in the little informational blurb except for the number of chapters. There was some valuable information that he had missed upon diving into the latest

story. He also maybe should not have skipped past the warning that popped up, but he was irritated by anything that was keeping him from reading.

Luckily, he figured out where this one was going very fast.

It started off with the author writing a very detailed description of Galo and Lio making out on the couch in their apartment, which would absolutely never happen, and not just because the couch was too short for Galo to lay down on it as described. Lio was three paragraphs in and the author had already managed to mention how much *bigger* Galo was than Lio. Twice. And, as much as he'd hated those paperback romance novels he'd read, they'd given him the context to know *exactly* where this was going.

Lio ground down against him as Galo's hands made their way down his back, stopping at his waistline before slipping below the hem of his pants—

Yeah. Yep. He definitely knew where this was going.

Obviously, Galo wouldn't recommend him something like this, but had Galo read them? Had he gone on the same journey Lio had, finding something good but unfinished and searching for more, only to stumble upon...

Lio suddenly recalled that when asked if he'd found weird porn on the internet, Galo's response had been, "sort of, maybe."

He may not have read all the way through one of these particular samples of fiction, but he sure as hell knew they existed. Galo probably wouldn't actually open one, though. He probably followed the internet rules, read the tags thoroughly, or at least stopped at the warning, which Lio now realized was probably for sexual content.

It took him a moment, too long a moment, to realize he was still skimming through. He caught flashes—hands, mouths, *skin*, fuck, he saw Galo half-naked every goddamn day but he'd strictly forbidden himself from imagining Galo completely nude—but he couldn't focus. He was too busy wondering why, if Galo knew this existed, he would still text recommendations to Lio. Was he just hoping Lio wouldn't get curious and

look for more? Did he think it was funny? He probably thought it was funny.

Lio paused and actually read a sentence. And the following sentence. And then he scoffed at his phone, shaking his head because really, this was just ridiculous.

"No. No, no. Fuck no. That would never happen." Lio tossed his phone over his shoulder where it bounced safely onto the mattress. "I can't *believe* they'd think I would bottom."

— — —

Lio looked *exhausted*. Actually, he'd looked that way for a couple of days now. Normally, he was the picture of perfection, not a hair out of place, quiet but sharp. Today, he was almost nodding off just sitting on one of the barstools at the kitchen island while Galo rifled through the fridge for something edible for dinner. Galo probably wouldn't have noticed the dark circles under his eyes if Aina hadn't pointed out the fact that he was wearing concealer to cover them, but the purple smudges were becoming steadily more visible as the make-up wore away.

Galo set a jar of pasta sauce on the countertop, but instead of going through the cabinets to determine whether they had pasta to go with it, he looked thoughtfully at Lio.

Lio peeled one eye open and said, "what."

"Are you getting sick?" he asked, holding back his urge to put his hand to Lio's forehead to check for a fever. Lio probably wouldn't be pleased if Galo messed up his bangs even further.

"No. Maybe." Lio sat up, squinted, considered. "No. Just tired." Lio was definitely working himself too hard, and probably making himself sick or something, and Galo couldn't let him do that.

"Well, we don't have much to do tonight, at least," Galo said. "You could relax a little bit. Let me handle dinner, go chill and, I dunno, read or

something? Reading's relaxing."

"*Lies*," Lio hissed, and the venom in it made Galo jump. "Reading got me into this mess. You sent me those fanfictions, and I stayed up all night reading—and then I did it *again*—"

"So you liked them!"

Lio made one of his inscrutable faces, and then looked determinedly at his hands, one on top of the other on the countertop. He was tapping his thumb against the opposite hand's knuckles, and Galo knew Lio's nervous tics well enough to be certain he was swinging his feet back and forth, just above the footrest of the barstool, which he couldn't reach due to his height and the way he was still sort of slumped.

"I didn't dislike them. The one about the dog was really cute. But..."

"Yeah, I know, it's kinda weird reading stuff about yourself, right?" Galo glanced at the jar of pasta sauce on the countertop, having forgotten when he took it out of the fridge in the first place.

"It's... yeah. Sure. But it's also, you know, the romantic stuff. That's bothering me."

It was strange for Galo to remember that he'd once seen Lio as an overconfident, unflappable superhuman of a man, and now Lio was sitting on a barstool at their kitchen counter, his face so red Galo was sure he really did have a fever, talking about 'the romantic stuff.' "I didn't realize that would make you so..." he began, grasping for an adjective. Nervous? Uncomfortable?

"How would you not realize that!"

Galo shrugged, leaning back against the counter. "Just, I dunno, we do that kinda stuff all the time. Nothing I sent was really... I mean, there's some stuff out there that's kinda *intense*, so I didn't show you that, because I'm kind of creeped out by that, even, but I didn't think anything I sent you was beyond our usual—"

"You kissed me!" Lio said, the legs of the barstool scraping the floor as he shoved it backward to stand up. "In one of those stories, in the college one."

"I... That never... oh. Oh, wait." It had updated. Galo knew that one had been updated, he'd gotten the email a few days ago, and apparently the author had taken things beyond the nameless tension between himself and Lio that they'd been writing before. "I'm thinking the new chapter of that one went in a direction I wasn't expecting."

"Oh. You haven't read it."

"Nope."

They both stared at each other, having run into an impasse, a counter island and a jar of pasta sauce between them, along with whatever feelings were making the air so heavy with tension.

"You know, though, right?" Lio's voice was characteristically quiet and uncharacteristically wavering. "You know people write that kind of thing about us."

He nodded. "I don't usually read those ones," he said. "I just... I get caught up in imagining, and then I forget that things aren't really like that."

Galo probably should have expected him to pick up on every tiny sliver of meaning that could have been implied. "What do you imagine, exactly?"

"It's... I... nothing," Galo said, not certain if he should be so thoroughly enjoying the way Lio focused on him, watching every syllable of his stammering like he was going to be tested on Galo's answer later. "It's just, maybe, back when we met I sort of, kind of, had a crush on—*Lio oh my god, what are you doing?*"

There were many things that Galo had expected Lio might do in response to his awkward confession. Laugh at him, maybe. Tell him it was alright, they don't have to talk about it anymore, maybe. Say that it was nice, but he didn't feel the same thing, maybe.

Galo had not expected Lio to climb over the counter island, barely avoiding knocking the jar to the floor. He had not expected Lio to hop off the other side and stare him down, making Galo feel small even though Lio was the one who was a foot and a half shorter. And he certainly hadn't expected Lio to hook one finger in to the strap that secured the medical sleeve Galo still sometimes wore (when the air was too dry and his scars got irritated) and yank him down to Lio's level.

The eye contact was almost too intense, but with Lio's face six inches from his own, Galo couldn't look anywhere else.

"Do you still?" Lio asked.

"Huh?" Galo's brain was fried. Lio's hair brushed against Galo's forehead. He was even closer now.

"Do you still have feelings for me?" Was he angry? Was he upset? Should Galo have mentioned something about that before they moved in together?

"I..."

"Galo Thymos, I want you to fucking answer me, or I want you to kiss me. Right now."

As far as ultimatums, demands, and one-or-the-other choices went, this was an easy one. Galo barely even had to lean in.

He hadn't lied in saying that he didn't usually read the romantic sort of fanfiction about the two of them. He would have been lying if he'd said he never read it at all. Galo knew what kissing Lio looked like through plenty of outsider eyes, which meant he hadn't had much space left in his brain to imagine what it would actually *feel* like.

Lio was warm, and he was gentle, and a little unsure, nothing like the passionate frenzy all of the romance writers in the world liked to imagine. Sinking into the kiss was like collapsing into a warm, cozy bed at the end of an exhausting day, in the way that Galo never wanted to leave this moment. Lio's fingers were always chilly, but as they made their way over Galo's

bare torso, he was pretty sure they weren't the only thing making him shiver.

It wasn't long before his back and shoulders began to ache. Galo wasn't meant to be hunched over like this, but it was an easy enough fix. He only had to stop kissing Lio for ten seconds to turn the two of them around and lift Lio onto the counter. Lio pouted anyway, as if those ten seconds were precious moments he could have been using. He made up for it by wrapping his legs around Galo's waist and opening his mouth into the next kiss.

Galo wasn't sure how long it lasted. Could've been seconds, could've been hours, but when he leaned back and asked, "how long?" Lio's eyes were half-closed in a dreamy stupor.

"What?" Lio snapped back into the present, blinking like he'd forgotten where they were, what they'd been talking out, everything except kissing Galo.

"How long have you felt this way about me?" Galo elaborated.

Lio wiped his bottom lip with his thumb and Galo was so entranced by the action that he almost missed Lio's response. "I don't know, really. How long have I known you for?"

"What? Wait, WHAT!?" Galo knew he was being obnoxious, knew he was on the track to one of his neighbors telling him to stop shouting, but Lio just laughed, reaching behind his head to rearrange the parts of his hair that Galo had mussed up.

"I can't explain it. Apparently, being attacked by a half-naked idiot who thinks he can fight fire with dumbassery turns me on."

Galo was laughing too, now. "Good! Because I'm still just as much of an idiot, and I don't plan on stopping anytime soon!"

"Good," Lio said, kissing him again, just once, quick but with all the fierceness Galo associated with him, "now you're *my* idiot."

Author's Note:

This is my first fic in this fandom, so that's always a Time. I have another one started which I very much enjoy and which will take forever because I have forgotten how to write smut.